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Koni, Kona, Kava

Orange-Beer Culture of the Cook Islands¹

Edwin M. Lemert²

SUMMARY. *The orange-beer culture of the Cook Islands is described. Island drinking customs were found to have cultlike forms, provide for social integration, and control drunken aggression.*

DANCE, DRUNK, BEER—that is the meaning of *koni, kona, kava*. It is a dance typically performed in the bush beer drinking groups of the Cook Islands after drinkers become intoxicated. It tends to be a parody on drunkenness and is used here figuratively to designate the whole complex of beer drinking and brewing as it varied between the islands and changed with passing time.

This report will examine the drinking culture of the Cook Islands and will assess its distinctive features of social control and its functional implications. Data were collected from informants and from a limited amount of participant observation in drinking sessions. Field interviewing was done on the islands of Aitutaki and Rarotonga, the most populous of all of the islands, where migrants from other islands were also interviewed.³ These islands are in the southern or lower Cook Islands (between 18° and 22° S lat. and 157° and 160° W long.), and their populations are Polynesian in race and culture. Natives generally refer to themselves and their language as Maori, and maintain ties with the Maori of New Zealand through migration and intermarriage (particularly since New Zealand assumed control of the islands in 1901). In 1965 the islands were granted internal self-government.

¹ The research for this paper was part of a larger investigation into drinking in the Pacific area. It was supported by grants from the National Institute of Mental Health in 1959–60 and 1960–61. Cook Islanders who had migrated to New Zealand were also interviewed as to their drinking behavior.

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³ Islanders from Atiu were the richest source of information.

EARLY BREWING

Fermentation of fruits was introduced into Hawaii and Tahiti by crews of early voyagers sometime before 1800 (1, pp. 91ff). Maturation and the spread of orange trees planted earlier by Captain Cook's men in Tahiti and by an unnamed propagator in the Cook Islands was providential, although scarcely in the way intended, for the oranges, apart from a brief period of export to California from Tahiti, were destined to become ingredients for Tahitian brewmasters whose brews were then disseminated widely. While precise dating is difficult, the efflorescence of orange fermentation in Tahiti seems to have followed a period of unhappy or disastrous experiences with the consumption of imported and locally distilled spirits.⁴ By 1845 Tahitians had pretty well settled on a crude orange beer, *ava anani*, as their chosen beverage for becoming intoxicated and celebrating of *Ma'ohi*, or *la vie tahitienne*: dancing, singing and quasi-sacred sexual communion. While some accounts credit Tahitians with bringing orange-beer lore to Rarotonga (2, Vol. II, p. 105), native informants say that Cook Islanders visiting relatives in Tahiti carried the techniques of brewing back with them in 1850. By the late 19th and early 20th centuries, the fermentation of orange juice and its ritualized drinking had become one of the more unique cultural growths in the Cook Islands as well.

The most primitive brewing method was to dig a hole in the ground, line it with banana or taro leaves and squeeze in the juice of oranges. Honey was sometimes added to speed fermentation, as was coconut-blossom nectar, the fruit of the *no-no* tree,⁵ *paru* (food scraps) or arrowroot. Sugar probably did not come into general use until sometime after 1910. When the brew was ready, i.e., it stopped fermenting, it was dipped into a large, oval, wooden bowl (*kumete*) from which it was served.

Barrels in which salted beef, lime juice or shortening had been shipped became brewing receptacles, and at a later date biscuit tins and demijohns also served. These were often sunk in the ground and the top covered with leaves, and a ti leaf or a rip hook placed on top—"to keep the ghosts from stealing the alcohol"—indicating that fermentation was not always successful. A sling

⁴ Tahitians distilled spirits from the roots of the *ti* palm tree (*Tietyia fructicosa*), which reach 4 ft in length and diameters of 6 to 8 in, and from breadfruit. Rich in fructose, *ti* palm roots were sometimes caramelized by Polynesians for eating.

⁵ This is its common name, meaning custard apple. It comes from a citrus tree (*Morinda citrifolia*), which apparently fell into disuse as a food after White contact.

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with a harness around the barrel was contrived from the inner bark of the lemon hibiscus tree and a carrying pole of wood from the same tree was used to lift the barrel from the hole and move it quickly when necessary.

A third type of brewing container was a *tumunui*, essentially a barrel hollowed out and shaped from the base of a coconut tree by means of two different kinds of adzes (Figure 1). Most of these were made in Atiu, where both soft and hard woods were used, the latter preferred because it lasted longer and made better brew. Some earlier *tumunuis*, probably before 1910, were hollowed-out tree stumps left rooted in the ground. These were associated with festive drinking similar to that which prevailed in Tahiti (3).

KAVA PATU

Kava patu (sometimes *kai*, *kava patu*) was the term given feasts for drinking and eating in which persons of one village hosted those of another. They were large groups of 40 to 60, and sometimes as many as 100 persons. Several *kumetes* might be used, each holding 30 to 40 gallons. Drinkers sat in a circle and were served in turn by a barman, *tuati*, dipping out drinks with a coconut shell. Several persons were designated to keep order. Drinking, eating, dancing and singing continued for a day or more, and might last for an entire week depending on the supply of brew.

Feasts of this sort were held three or four times a year during the orange season (April through July or August). Apart from the reciprocal hospitality, elements of emulation and rivalry figured in *kava patu*. Hosts tried to make more beer than guests could drink, or so strong that they became unconscious. In one district on the island of Mangaia, the guests prevailed if they were able to drink all of the beer. They then tried to capture the barrel, and sometimes did. To forestall this the *tumunui* was left fastened to the tree roots.

In Titikaveka on Rarotonga rivalry at *kava patu* was between two eponymic divisions of the same village, *Kuare* and *Nga'ako*, each of which had its own *tumunui*, but each made up an *ute*⁶ to dedicate that of its rival. One was named *Muru-muru-a'i*, "getting warm at the fire," the other, *Te puta o te tupa*, "The land crab in the hole." Hosts and guests in a district sometimes changed places

⁶ An *ute* is a convivial song, sometimes including staccato rhythmical grunts.

in kava patu, moving back and forth. Drinking and eating reciprocity also centered around work groups called *kai kava ainga*, in which men from one village working on the road near another were given brew and food by the local village group.

Differences of opinion existed as to whether women drank orange brew at kava patu. Some informants insisted that only men drank while others said women had separate kumetes and their own barwomen, or even their own drinkfests. But the vehemence with which they denied that females participated in kava patu indicated that historically this had been a sore issue and remained so in 1960. Whatever separation of men and women may have existed disappeared as drinkers became more intoxicated, ending in fights over women and in adultery conducive to marital discord. A man who had been a *Mataipo* (district governor) in about 1895 told of taking the lead in his village on Rarotonga to end drinking by women. Even earlier in 1872 the missionary on Rarotonga recorded that there had been a decline in the numbers of women present at large drinking sessions which he observed (4, p. 105).

PANGE KAVA

While New Zealanders and others familiar with the Cook Islands call clandestine drinking in the bush by natives "bush beer schools," the Maori speak of *pange kava* (Figure 2). This took place in small rather than large groups and came to supplement or replace kava patu. In part this could be traced to economic changes such as the export of oranges and the use of relatively costly imported ingredients for brewing. But the most significant influences were the church-government repression of brewing and drinking during the 19th century and installation of native prohibition after New Zealand took sovereignty over the Cook Islands. It is also possible that early patterns of reciprocal hospitality broke down under the strains of drunken fighting, leading to a more selective and exclusive form of drinking. Theft of brew was also a hazard when word of a drinking session became too widely known. Finally, secretiveness was a way of dealing with men who roved about looking for beer: *tangata kimi kava*, "lazy men" who did not help make the beer.

Participants

Generally the drinkers in pange kava were *mapu*, young men technically between 18 and 30 years of age. Younger boys were

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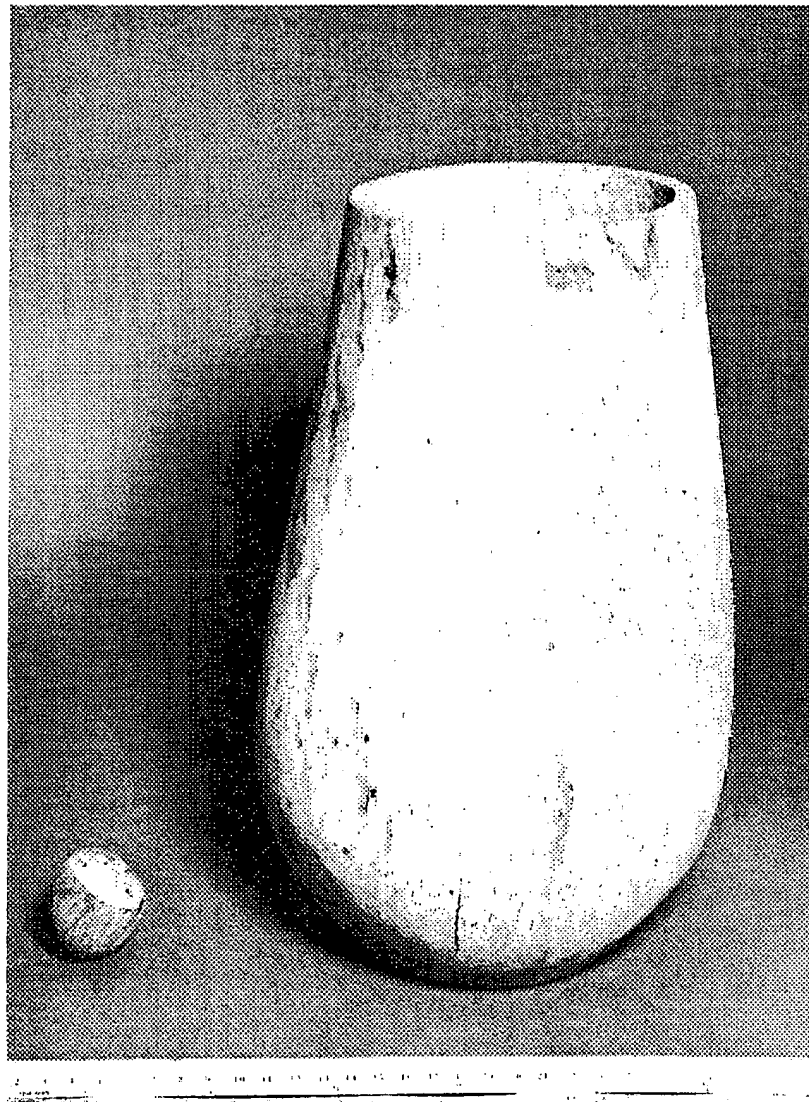


FIGURE 1.—*Tumunui and Serving Cup Made in Atiu*

not supposed to drink, an expectation given force by holding par-
ents responsible if they did. This rule seemed to have held pretty
well on all of the islands except Penryhn, where drinking by under-
age youth became a problem in the 1930s.

While older men could and did attend bush beer sessions, their



FIGURE 2.—A Bush Beer "School" of the Early 1900s. The photograph was reproduced from an issue of the *Cook Island News*, circa 1959.

role was marginal. They sat back away from the circle of drinkers and were served with a special cup. According to some informants this was done because old men were said to spread disease, but others denied this was the reason.

The strongest feelings of bush drinkers revolved around the exclusion of women. This was called a rule and said to be iron-clad on Atiu and only slightly less so on Mangaia. While the reason given for this was that fights were likely if women were present, much more common and insistent was a sense of repugnance at the unseemly behavior of women when drunk: soiling their dresses, taking off their pants, exposing themselves by urinating in the sight of men, or engaging in gross sexual provocation. Such behavior, called *ma-eueu*, literally "to be opened out wide," violated part of a whole system of avoidances regulating man-woman contacts and the concealment of female genitalia, which had sacred connotations of family and land.

The cast of participants as well as the characteristics of those excluded emphasized the masculinity values dominant in the in-



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teraction of the bush beer group. It was a place where men, not boys, met to drink and conversation was free to range over a wide variety of congenial topics. Boys who showed up were rudely driven off or kept at a distance, and the occasional woman who came uninvited was soon made uncomfortable, e.g., by heavy sarcasm, "You're the only man in the group!"

Although Europeans in Rarotonga at times joined in bush drinking, they seldom did so on Atiu. Their presence was anomalous and produced inescapable artificiality. They either received excessively formal treatment or became targets for criticism and generalized hostility, occasionally being subjected to deliberate humiliation. Typically the group tried to "get the *papaa* drunk"—analogous to the tactics of Japanese in Hawaii when *haoles* (Caucasians) drank with them at teahouse parties (5).

Ranking Maori, such as *Ariki*, *Komonos*, *Mataipos* and *Rangatira*, did not take part in bush drinking. Historically they had more access to spirits, either through smuggling or official permits, in contrast to the orange brew which came to be the drink of commoners. More important, maintaining requisite attitudes of respect or veneration toward titled persons was jeopardized by intoxication. Exceptions to the above were church deacons and police who occasionally drank in the bush; presumably similar if less intense role strains were present in such cases.

While the composition of bush beer groups to a large degree resulted from systematic exclusion of women, the young, to some extent the old, and disinclination of high-placed persons to attend, it was also affected by experience with troublemakers. Although kinship was not a feasible basis on which to organize bush groups, experienced drinkers indicated their preference for drinking with brothers, cousins or other relatives. Otherwise they drank with close friends or those with whom they worked or took part in sports.

Pange Kava as a Cult

The secrecy, exclusiveness and intense preoccupation with the minutiae of brewing and drinking in bush beer groups suggest their cultlike affinities. To these must be added ritual, at least nominally religious, and an internal discipline of their own. These features were present in orange beer drinking on all the islands, but were least pronounced on Penryhn and most conspicuous on Atiu, where it became climactic sometime between 1920 and 1940. The scope and ubiquitous nature of beer drinking there was at-

tested to by official measures taken in about 1940 to ensure that cargo estimates could be met for shipping oranges to New Zealand, which otherwise were going into beer barrels.⁷ That which follows generally will have this provenience, recognizing, however, the importance of earlier historical events on the "missionary island" of Rarotonga in shaping bush drinking culture.

Making the Brew

Making orange beer was a collective enterprise in which work and responsibility for supplying ingredients were shared or rotated. Prospective drinkers each brought a basket of oranges, "obtained wherever they could," to a spot chosen for the tumunui. The best peelers were designated and one was chosen to squeeze the oranges through a sugar bag. At this point several different procedures could be followed. One was to drink the brew previously made, then new orange juice was squeezed into the barrel. The second was to pour the brew into cans, prepare the next batch of beer, then turn to drinking. A third was to name two men to peel oranges while others drank, allowing the peelers only small amounts of beer until their task was completed. After the work was finished the tumunui sometimes was lifted out of the ground and moved if a risk of discovery was believed to exist.

Fermentation continued for from 3 to 5 days. On Atiu during the orange season some groups made brew and drank daily, relying on the sediment of the old brew to ensure fermentation of the new. Brews varied in their alcohol content and there were times when, according to one informant, "We didn't get very drunk." Preoccupation with the alcoholic strength of the beer was revealed in the forementioned placing of a talisman on top of the tumunui. It was also reflected in the belief that if women squeezed the oranges the brew would be spoiled. As far as I could determine there were no acknowledged brew masters of the sort recognized in Tahiti (*aipo*).

Drinking Ritual

In "earlier times" (before 1910) a conch shell was blown and a bell was rung to signify the time for drinking. When all were gathered the conch shell was blown again to start the drinking.

⁷I inferred this from statements by informants and statistics on the peak export years for oranges (6).

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When police searches grew more frequent this practice ceased. Once the drinkers were seated in a circle a prayer was said and a hymn sung. Then one person gave a speech thanking the host and urging all to have a good time and not make trouble. Serving was begun by the tuati, who dipped a half coconut shell from a can of beer which was brought into the circle. An important person might be served first, beginning on the left and then the barman continued around the circle. Each had to drink the whole contents of the shell without sipping or delay, although he might pass a round or hand his cup to the next drinker. If the drinker dallied, the tuati lunged at him or kicked sand over him. The tuati even when intoxicated usually kept the order of drinks carefully in mind.

The tuati also kept order. This he did by suddenly pointing a stick at an unruly drinker and telling him to be quiet, or even rapping him with the stick. If he persisted the host might order the tuati not to serve him any more beer. If necessary the barman roused out the troublemaker or the whole group pushed him headlong down the trail.

Most groups appointed a *tiaki*, or guard, who was stationed some distance away to warn of intruders and approaching police. When a man appeared the tiaki called out his name and the others indicated whether or not he could enter. A special large coconut shell, diameter about 8 in, was kept for late-comers or "lazy ones." If they could drink the contents in one draught, they could stay. Otherwise they had to leave, being told, "Your mouth couldn't talk; the cup drove you away."

Each village on Atiu had a special name for these jumbo cups. In Tengtani circa 1930 the cup was named *Tuarea*, after "The woman who sleeps among the red hibiscus on the marae." None at the session where this was mentioned knew who she was, but one intimated that she might be a goddess. In Titikaveka (Rarotonga) a cup had a similar designation—*Kaute e mura e te pa paraingala*, meaning the "red hibiscus flower by your face"—but with a more secular double meaning, "A big fish that was caught."

A troublemaker who was ejected from a bush drinking group became known and was usually blacklisted by other groups. Otherwise he was placed on probation for several weeks or even months before being allowed to rejoin the drinkers. Some groups insisted that a cousin vouch for the deviant before he could return. If he erred again both he and the cousin were sent away.

Dedication of Tumunui

Much of the interaction of bush drinking groups centered around the tumunui both physically and symbolically. Making one cost a day to a week of hard work, and over the years it acquired many sentimental connotations so it was treasured and guarded against theft by other drinkers or confiscation by police. Some notion of the esoteric attitude toward tumunui was disclosed when I sought to have a man on Aitutaki make one for me. His reply was, "Maori don't take money to make that for you." Later in Rarotonga when a man from Aitu made one for me, a heated controversy broke out among my intermediaries as to whether I should pay the man. A final note in this connection was the fate of the largest tumunui ever made on Atiu. This held 52 gallons of juice or the contents of 13 kerosene tins. The pile of oranges needed to provide the juice stood 3 ft high. The barrel, named *Maunga Nui*, was manufactured in 1933 and used for 6 years. At last with the authorities hot on the trail of its owners, the tumunui was burned by common consent rather than let it fall into the hands of the police.

A tumunui became known for its size, the quality of the beer it made, its age and the exploits of the group to which it belonged. Each was given a name on its completion as part of the introductory ritual of a drink session, and a special ute was composed for the occasion. Barrels could be rededicated also. Some names, perhaps most, were chosen to emphasize the large capacity of the barrels. Names of boats were favored in order to liken the amount of beer contained by the barrel to the size of the cargo holds. However, other features of the environment were a source of names. One relatively small village on Atiu had six tumunui named as follows: *Maunga Nui* (Great Mountain), *Te Pauka Ariki* (Pig of the King), *Au Ara o Te Moa* (The Chicken's Penis), *Makuru* (Fat), *Te Koka* (It Wanders About), *Te Vai Nui* (The Great Water).

Utes and Songs

Utes were the traditional music of the Maori and they reflected the common tendency of Polynesians to express their deeper sentiments in dance and song. Utes and modern songs, along with dancing, were important features of the sociability nurtured in the bush beer groups. Their composition and singing was an ongoing process which reflected current concerns, commemorated important events or welcomed visitors. They told of love affairs,

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sexual encounters, the death of a relative, how a person was arrested for making beer, how the Resident Commissioner made a native woman pregnant and sent her to New Zealand, how a shipload of virgins came to Rarotonga, the story of Maui Pomare and others.⁸

Some of the utes were made up, sung and forgotten; others caught on and were sung many times. Some were very old, probably Tahitian or Samoan in origin, and contained words sung but not understood. A specimen ute from Atiu tells how the *Au Vaine*, a women's organization, surprised beer drinkers in their cave retreat where they were accustomed to drink and sleep overnight.

*Te ana i tiamaru te vaai mataora
 Kare e mataora akaous*

*Kua imi au e imi atu vai
 te ana iti Punaruru*

*Kua ope pauroa e te vaine to ute
 mai ia au*

*Ere maau tena otana kote ao tania
 tena*

Kua tae ote Pao kua inue

*Kua mou ote Au Vaine tuia mai nei
 ote aka vanui e matara us ana*

*Ko (Paau rae puku) me nga Mataipos
 kimi ake tetai ravenga*

*Teia ua'i toa poa tei
 te ana iti o Punaruru*

The cave at Tiamaru once a happy
 place no longer is a happy place
 I have been searching for the water
 of the cave at Punaruru

The ladies have grabbed the ute
 which I sing

That song is not yours, it comes
 from the past [spirit world]

The night was over and we had drunk

The Au Vaine caught us and the resi-
 dent agent had come

Through Paau rae puku and two Ma-
 taipos I was trying to find a way
 out [of jail]

The Two who escaped are like the
 heroes of the Boer War
 still in the cave at Punaruru

Talk

Talk within the bush beer groups stressed not only their importance as a cult but also as a channel of communication and as a means of giving individual and social meaning to current and past experience. It was a place where the culturally old and the socially new met, and for the individual a place of discovery to establish or redefine personal identity. The priority of the cult values came through in recurrent discussion of the quality of the beer, the comparative merits of different ingredients, such as coconut juice versus pineapple, its costs, who was to make it next, and

⁸ Maui stories or myths, which prevailed in the Cook Islands and New Zealand, dealt with a culture hero with superhuman prowess in navigation and fishing, but who also had human qualities. (He was sometimes a trickster.)

how to avoid trouble with the police—topics which were threaded through with a common bond of anxiety.

Conversation also dealt with the food to be eaten after drinking, or, for the younger single men, the girls they were going to have sexually, or, occasionally, veering to a discussion of homosexuality. Closely related was the talk of sports. Married men disliked to talk about women and made their feelings plain: "We came here to drink not talk about women!" Their subjects ran to economic matters, such as the condition of the copra crop, politics, complaints about the water supply, their poor housing, and high prices in the stores of the papaa. Stories were told of village quarrels, the commission of crimes, and of the experiences of those who had been to New Zealand.

In 1910 bush drinkers began to talk about genealogies and of land titles, a development which concurred with the establishment of a British Protectorate over the Cook Islands and setting up a land court based on Anglo-Saxon law. A pastor who as a youth drank in bush beer groups on Aitutaki recollected:

"In 1910 talk in the group turned to genealogies. It was in there that I first learned my own genealogy from my uncle. Later I mentioned what I had been told, such as so-and-so being my cousin. My father then corrected what I had heard and taught me correct genealogies. After that I decided whom to admit to the group depending on how they were related to me."

Troubles

Although the discipline of the bush beer groups worked relatively well, dissension, conflict and fighting were not infrequent. What began as orderly drinking and sociability more or less deteriorated as members became drunk. The emulative pattern of drinking with its concomitant boasting and downgrading of one who could not keep up, e.g., by calling him *vaine*, was potentially explosive. Fights ensued when a braggart had his bluff called. Inadvertent or deliberate sexual comments about a girl who turned out to be another drinker's sister or cousin were a common source of fights.

Talk of genealogies or of war in the past also aroused animosities, particularly when claims of high status for ancestors or of the inheritance of land were ridiculed. A boaster might be put down by others telling him that his father "gave him a small coconut," meaning little land. Fights sometimes erupted from discussions of the division of land in which a man reportedly received

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a greater share than his older brother. Or anger flared when one man discovered that another's grandfather had attacked or betrayed his grandfather.

Other types of quarreling or fighting inhered in the pattern of drinking itself, as in the case of fights which broke out when the paths of two drunken men from different bush beer groups crossed on their way home. The men usually became very hungry after drinking and on arriving home late looked about for food. Finding none they quarreled with their wives, cuffed them around or even beat them.

The most serious fights started over the theft of beer. Once it was stolen, its owners would set out to find it. If they failed to do so they waited in the village until drunken men showed up. Then, as one put it, "Big trouble!" The practice of drinking until the imbibor lost consciousness, woke and drank more sometimes left the group vulnerable, as the members of another group searching for more to drink came on them and took their beer. On sobering up, the angry victims would set out in pursuit and a brawl was likely if they found the thieves.

According to local judges most crimes were committed by the Maoris when they were intoxicated; the primary crimes were assault or petty theft, such as plundering food ovens to satisfy their hunger. However, they usually fought with their fists, only occasionally with sticks. Grudges were not carried over from drunken brawls, but the underlying conflict might be revived at another time. The men on Atiu were generally regarded as more aggressive than Maori on other islands, and some drink-related murders occurred on their island. Informants in 1960 told of four or five murders that took place in bush beer groups over the preceding 10-year period. In that year two men were under sentence for manslaughter committed while drunk.

The Church and the Beer Groups

When "orange rum," as it was then called, first came to Rarotonga the theocratic missionary government in existence since 1828 responded to the challenge through police, courts and laws it had already instituted to punish such offenses as stealing, adultery, fornication, tattooing love signs and breaking the public peace (7, p. 35). Church influence over the administration of justice had been assured by appointing deacons of the church as police and requiring judges to be church members, any of whom could be

removed by church action. A system grew up for punishing moral infractions and violations of liquor laws with a schedule of fines, which Ariki, governors (Mataipos), police and judges divided among themselves. The latter two positions were much sought after for the financial gain, power and status which they conferred. The combination of avarice and religious zeal made for ruthless and repressive regimes, especially in Aitutaki and Mangaia. Police were not accountable and they resorted to such means as forcible entry of houses, arbitrary seizure of personal items, use of informers, and even torture to extract confessions and obtain fines.

The harshness of the police systems varied depending on whether a native pastor or an European missionary was in charge in the district; the latter generally was a moderating influence. While the draconic methods of the police seemingly served their purposes at first, by 1860 the brewing of orange beer had spread. Spirits brought in by traders from Tahiti began to be sold in stores in Rarotonga. During the same decade the hold of the church on natives weakened and church membership fell sharply (8, p. 79).

By 1870 the first generation of missionaries retired. The new pastor on Rarotonga, James Chalmers (who replaced E. W. R. Krause), turned to tactics of compromise and indirection, apparently with the belief that programs of work and leisure could counteract the strong attraction which orange beer held for the young Maoris. An opportunity to apply his methods came with the emergence of a quasimilitary movement among the bush drinkers (4, pp. 95, 96):

"About two years ago there was started by the beer drinkers at this settlement a volunteer corps. They were drilled by a man who had been in Tahiti for some time. . . . They were recognized by the Chiefs, and the majority were men who for many years had never attended any service of any kind. I knew them only by seeing them in their sacred groves at night, around orange beer barrels and a great fire, naked and fierce. . . . These men met for drill, and I felt that here was a new thing growing up amongst us, which if seized and guided, might be turned to good account. . . . I had no power to stop it, even if I had desired to do so."

Thereafter the church, on the surface at least, dissociated its antidrinking activities from those of the police. The young volunteers were encouraged to march to church service and to join in church building projects, and a Boys' Brigade similar to Boy Scouts was organized and dedicated to nondrinking. Ex-drinkers were

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brought into a group called the Rechabites and enlisted in a cam-
paign against drinking, with special early morning sermons given
for their benefit. When drinkers could be gotten to church, mass
prayers were said to strengthen their resolve against drinking.

Chalmers was careful not to oppose the beer drinkers directly.
At times when encountering them in the bush he asked them to
empty their beer barrels and then prayed or exhorted them to
abandon their drinking. Deacons or other members of the church
carried out surveillance in which they crept up and spied on the
bush groups, noting the names of drinkers which later were read
aloud in church. They dared not try to break up or interfere with
the groups, for to do so risked being severely manhandled. Follow-
ing the example of Chalmers they avoided notifying the police.
Drinkers in many districts were dropped from the church rolls
after being arrested, but usually they were reinstated after paying
their fines.

A much more aggressive line of attack on drinking was pursued
by a church-sponsored women's organization, the Au Vaine, which
dated from the turn of the century. They not only searched out
bush beer sessions but also knocked over the barrels and sang
hymns to the drinkers. In 1926 the Au Vaine was reorganized with
broader socioeconomic purposes of encouraging cleanliness, plant-
ing and conservation of crops. On occasion they marched four
abreast wearing garlands of crimson hibiscus and scented leis of
frangipani, beating drums and stopping to propagandize wherever
groups of men congregated. They patrolled plantations to prevent
theft and to scout out beer groups. At times they gave information
to the police and testified against beer makers. A Resident Agent
on Mauke during one period paid them 3 shillings for each case
in which they acted as witnesses.

Secular Control of Drinking

By 1893, following the establishment of a British Protectorate,
the church-state police system funded from fines was replaced by
one supported from government funds or subsidies. The number
of police, in places numbering as many as 1 for every 12 persons,
was cut sharply; on Mangaia, for example, from 155 to 12.⁹ The
problems resulting from lack of controls over smuggling and open

⁹ Appendix to Jrs. of Hse of Reps. of New Zeal., Wellington, 1892. F. J. Moss
to his Exc. the Governor. 31 Aug. 1891, 13 Nov. 1893.

sale of spirits disappeared with the installation of prohibition and a medical permit system by New Zealand when it assumed political control of the Cook Islands. Thereafter orange beer, if anything, became more firmly rooted as the drink of Maori commoners.

Police continued to be composed of men who were for the most part church deacons and many of them persisted in the belief that drinking was a grievous wrong to be searched out and punished. Over-all, however, after the turn of the century the effects of police measures are best described as keeping illegal brewing and drinking within tolerable limits rather than repressing them. Anglo-Saxon judges mitigated the severity of police action; while fines progressively increased with each offense, they dropped back to the first offense level at the beginning of the year.

Discovering beer parties was not an especially difficult police task. While drinkers remained quiet during the early stages of drinking, ultimately they became noisy and revealed their location. Men stumbling drunk into a village, or merely the absence of a number of men, was sufficient to alert the police who also were aided by informers, sometimes wives who, tired of their husbands' drinking or their own maltreatment, notified police of a bush beer rendezvous. More often a troublemaker who had been ejected from a bush group became the informer, venting his anger and frustration by sending word or going to the police. Meantime, as one Maori observed, "If the others are smart they will have moved."

The position of informers was unenviable and even dangerous, considering that the police were known to place them in bush beer groups in order to secure information on the commission of crimes. On Atiu where beer group solidarity was high, an informer received what a spokesman called the "silent treatment." "We wait until he is drunk, then we knock him!" Police tactics in one important respect actually reinforced the pattern of bush drinking: the practice of arbitrarily searching houses without a warrant.

By 1960 traditional bush beer drinking was waning and giving place to drinking in houses. The old wild orange trees, whose fruit was preferred for brewing, were disappearing. Government-planned orange production projects obtained increasing support and commitment from the Maoris, who were drawn more and more into a money economy and production for export. Brew from malt, yeast and sugar was now commonplace. But a great deal of the older attitudes toward bush drinking remained, chiefly in kava ainga. Apart from regular, fixed-wage workers, it was almost im-

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possible to recruit labor without employers and work contractors supplying brew. This was true even when more than the standard wages were offered.

Another modern development was the bottling of illegal brew for sale. This was disturbing to police and others because known troublemakers could obtain liquor when drunk and were not subject to the discipline of the bush beer groups. Whatever new laws and means of control for alcoholic beverages were to emerge as the Cook Islands moved toward self-government, it was clear that the bush beer cult would soon be little more than a subject for nostalgic recollection.

DISCUSSION

In another report which compared the use of alcoholic beverages in three Polynesian societies, including Tahiti and Western Samoa, I concluded that bush beer drinking was relatively well integrated with the culture and social organization of the Cook Islands (3). I did not deal with the question whether the drinking groups were themselves an integrating factor, nor did I propose any pivotal social functions for the bush beer groups.

The persistence of the drinking groups and their relatively long history in the Cook Islands indicate that they served substantial needs and that their significance was neither ephemeral nor marginal. What little is known of their beginning suggests that they were a diffusion of clandestine drinking forms already well established in Tahiti by 1850, adapted and put to special purposes of the Maori.

In retrospect, the crisis which the appearance of organized native drinking created for the missionary church gives the early bush beer groups a nativist, anticlerical cast. But if they functioned in this way it was short-lived. Few facts favor the idea,¹⁰ other than the possibility that residual influences from the Mamaia cult in Tahiti (10) lingered or received brief new life in the Cook Islands beer groups. Maori whom I queried on this point gave negative replies and one or two were shocked that I would even ask the question. A more appropriate query is whether the intrusion of drinking merely played a part in a more general crisis of

¹⁰ Beaglehole (9, p. 97) suggests that the early drunken behavior of the Cook Islanders, such as swearing in English, tearing up their Western-type clothing and burning houses, was a symbolic attack on missionary values.

the missionary church, or received attention as a symbol of its difficulties.

The rise of orange beer culture during the same decade which saw decline in interest and participation in the church suggests that the two were not discrete phenomena. Disenchantment with Christianity may well have coincided with the discovery of the superior qualities of liquor as a means of achieving esoteric experience and sociability more congenial to Maori values. Both may have been furthered when island rulers gained control of the churches in Atiu and Mangaia and turned them to their special political and economic ends (11). The pattern which evolved of large groups drinking on Sundays tends to support such an interpretation, particularly after many Maoris lost their willingness to sit through long church services and observance of the Sabbath became a kind of cultural vacuum.

Beaglehole (9) believed that alcohol was readily adopted by the Maori as a means to throw off oppressive missionary controls and to indulge in older patterns of sexual activity. While this may have been true at an early period of drinking, over time the bush beer groups evolved into small groups from which women were excluded. In functional terms Beaglehole attributed the free use of alcohol by Cook Islanders to their character structure, which made for repressed aggression but did not make them fearful of their own aggression (9, p. 250). But if applicable this may have been due to the *form* of their aggression which was not very destructive, in contrast to that, say, of drunken Samoans.

All of the foregoing are generalizations at best, and they scarcely shed much light on the form and meaning of drinking for the Maori. Nor do they explicate particular values involved, nor the basis for differential participation in drinking. Bush drinking was closely tied to the social position of the mapu, who were younger vigorous men not yet settled into responsible adult roles. From one point of view alcohol use can be seen as a way of compensating for the lack of meaningful activities available to this group. Such an interpretation was put forward by Davis (12), based on his observations in the Cook Islands during the mid-1940s. He held that the White man and his civilization had destroyed or eroded the native cultural forms organized around the needs of male youth: "All the factors which meant most to youth disappeared; his cultural schools, his professional and craft instruction; his balance of work and play; these had all gone" (p. 197). Here Davis was referring to native instruction in sex education, navigation, fish and crop tend-

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ing, house construction, native history, singing, dancing and sports. The rest of his argument was that demoralization followed from the absence of any new youth culture to replace the old: "The new leaders did not suggest any adequate or attractive displacements of the old ways. The result as apparent today is that a good deal of time is passed in brewing and drinking fruit beer."

This conclusion has a surface plausibility and, indeed, some truth; but it neglects the ingenuity, inventiveness and ability of the Maori, if not most Polynesians, to cope with problems on their own terms (often covertly where White men are concerned). From my materials the bush beer groups emerge as a fairly adequate adaptation to the requirements and purposes of the mapu, at least as satisfactory as the New Zealand or English pub, and considerably more elaborated and genuine in a cultural sense.

Bush beer groups provided informal sex education for the young Maori, opportunities for expression in singing and dancing, acquaintance with the Maori past, learning genealogies, and a testing place where he could establish himself as a man among peers. Moreover kava ainga structured the work of the mapu and gave it meaning according to older values of social reciprocity and conviviality. Insistence on a supply of brew as an indispensable part of agreements for their labor signaled refusal of the mapu to be drawn into pure economic exchange relationships and also forced others to acknowledge the independent existence of their groups.

Early conflict between the church and the bush beer groups, which inhered in the high moral purposes of the missionaries, probably was aggravated by their policy of regarding single persons as candidates for church membership. This was not done, for example, in Samoa, where only married persons were admitted. After the changes introduced by Chalmers, and the reconstitution of the police at the end of the century, the conflict was attenuated and in many ways became a kind of patterned evasion of law.

Bush beer drinking continued to be formally condemned by the church and subject to police action, but closer examination reveals an underlying accommodation between the opposing elements. Church membership was no bar to drinking and it was not unusual for a man to attend church, change his clothes and go out to drink beer in the bush. In some instances he was asked to summarize the sermon, thus providing some vicarious religious experience for the others as well as adding another topic of interest for discussion.

While not all bush groups initiated drinking with religious rites, many of them did. One replay for me of songs and utes from a

previous beer session began with a hymn and a prayer and closed in a like manner. The depth of meaning in such observances is not easy to fathom, but they were consistent with the deadly seriousness which underlay the drinking.

Policemen, even deacons, were not above drinking when the bush groups were small and those present could be trusted not to expose them. Stringent enforcement of the law was considerably blunted by considerations of kinship, with indications that arrests were more likely to be made of persons visiting from other islands. Payment of fines was often shared by the drinking group, and arrangements were usually made to have a family member or relative assume blame for brewing when a heavy fine or jail loomed for a repeated offense. Finally, local judges and Resident Agents from beer-drinking New Zealand restrained overzealous enforcement of laws against drinking and brewing. Instead, they allowed the drinking fines to become much like a taxation system. Administrators were known to regard the total revenue from fines for liquor law violations as a measure of the health of the island economy.

The extreme differentiation of bush beer culture on Atiu may have been facilitated by the isolated nature of the island, its slower response to missionization, and the capture of church control by local chiefs. The chiefs' attitudes toward drinking, like those of other titled persons, were ambivalent at best. Differences from other islands which affected temperament and resistance to White culture influence may have helped make a more distinctive and cultlike pattern of drinking on Atiu. Conceivably their aboriginal warlike dispositions made their drinking cult and intoxication more useful to express their aggressiveness after warfare was repressed and they had adopted a religion stressing pacifism.

Conflict with police and political authority, represented by the resident agents, undoubtedly contributed to the solidarity of the bush beer groups. But it does not explain their internal discipline, the importance placed on orderly drinking, the expulsion of disruptive persons and the unparalleled use of a probation system. While this may have been a unique invention for dealing with problems of intoxicated behavior, it seems more likely that it was modeled after the practice of the early missionary church. The church expelled deviants, but allowed their return if they reformed. As such, group solidarity and discipline represented the determination of the bush beer groups to protect their shared values which, as I have proposed, were esoteric or sacred as well as secular.

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